

Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: The Hedgehog and the Fox Revisited

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Resumen

El siguiente artículo propone un nuevo enfoque hacia el estudio de las relaciones civiles-militares. Su propósito es proporcionarles a los civiles en el poder legislativo y ejecutivo conceptos e información que les ayude a cumplir con sus responsabilidades lo mejor posible como funcionarios democráticamente electos. Argumenta que estos civiles no necesitan saber tanto en el tema como los oficiales militares, quienes saben mucho sobre “una cosa importante”. Basado en la literatura académica y una amplia experiencia en Latinoamérica y otras partes del mundo, el artículo sugiere que las relaciones civiles-militares se pueden conceptualizar mejor como un terna de control civil, cumplimiento efectivo de los papeles y misiones, y eficiencia para lograr los objetivos al menor costo posible. Esta terna se puede lograr solamente por medio de la creación de instituciones que incorporan y personifican conocimientos y mecanismos de control tanto del poder ejecutivo como legislativo del estado democrático.

Palabras Clave: Relaciones civil-militares, fuerzas armadas, gobernabilidad y democracia

Abstract

This article argues for a new focus in the study of civil-military relations. It seeks to provide civilian policymakers with ideas and information to help them best carry out their responsibilities as democratically elected leaders. Referring to knowledge of military matters as “one big thing,” it argues that it is not necessary for policymakers to know as much about matters of defense as their military counterparts. Based on the academic literature and the author’s experience in Latin America and other regions, this article suggests that civil-military relations are best understood in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, and civilian control of the armed forces. These relations will only be effectively normalized when institutions incorporate and personalize understanding and mechanisms of control at both executive and legislative levels.

Keywords: Civil-military relations, Armed Forces, Governance and democracy

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INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of 2005, a number of dramatic events have occurred in Latin America which should have called our attention to the perilous relationships between the democratically elected civilian governments and their armed forces. These events concern the power relationships between democratically elected civilian presidents and the armed forces. In a recent publication, David Pion-Berlin, one of the foremost scholars writing in the field of civil-military relations in Latin America, challenged the “current intellectual constructs” for conceptualizing this field of study.¹ I fully agree with his call for new thinking about civil-military relations, not only in Latin America but everywhere, and my goal in this article is to provide a model to describe civil-military relations, and ways to analyze different patterns in these relations. I will draw on the experiences of Colombia and countries in Central America because they are similar in terms of the conflict and violence, and dissimilar in terms of the longevity of democracy. Specific empirical cases will both illustrate the approach and the possible path to useful analysis.²

The subtitle of this article is taken from Aesop’s fable, which was made famous most recently by Sir Isaiah Berlin’s brilliant essay on Leo Tolstoy titled *The Hedgehog and the Fox*. Berlin took as his point of departure a line by the poet Archilochus: “The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.” This suggests that, “The fox, for all of his cunning, is defeated by the hedgehog’s defense.”³ Like the fox, it occurs to me, democratically elected politicians and governments must know many things, while the armed forces in Latin America are like the hedgehog, for they know one big thing: national security and defense. After all, they spend their careers studying about and training in these areas, they belong to institutions that focus almost exclusively on them, and they ascend the ranks depending on their knowledge and proficiency in preparing for war. It is impossible for civilians, lacking this background, to develop anything like the expertise of officers concerning things military. Often, the officers will utilize a hedgehog strategy and challenge the right of civilians to control the use of military power precisely because of their lack of familiarity with these issues.

1 Pion-Berlin, David S. 2005. “Political Management of the Military in Latin America” *Military Review*, January-February; 19-31. Also published in Portuguese and Spanish in the same journal, March-April.

2 The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the United States Navy or the U.S. Department of Defense.

3 Berlin, Sir Isaiah. 1953. *The Hedgehog and the Fox* Simon & Schuster, New York.

I do not believe civilians need to be experts on these topics to do their jobs. They clearly must know something, and just as important, they must be aware of what they do not know, if they are to be successful in utilizing the armed forces and the more widely construed “security forces” to the best advantage of their government and nation. I thus disagree with Pion-Berlin when he states that “...civilians do not have to worry about investing the necessary time to understanding defense, strategy, tactics, preparation, budgeting, deployment, doctrine, or training.”⁴ In my opinion they must know enough to be able to ensure that the armed forces are doing what they are required to do, not only in terms of submitting to civilian control (which is Pion-Berlin’s main point), but also in successfully fulfilling the current very wide spectrum of roles and missions assigned to the diverse security forces in Latin America. For this reason I will offer here a different approach to civil-military relations whereby the foxes, i.e. civilians, can better understand what the hedgehog knows—modern national security and defense—and thus promote stronger relations between civilian government leaders and military officials.

RECENT EVENTS IN LATIN AMERICAN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

Since the beginning of 2005, a series of events have drawn attention to the state of civil-military relations in Latin America. Several of these have to do with the traditional issues of civilian control of the armed forces and access to power. Others have more subtle implications, but they all illustrate the broader challenges inherent in civil-military relations that I will discuss later in this article.

Currently, at least three Latin American countries are experiencing major public conflicts over control, or access to power, between civilians and the armed forces. In Nicaragua, President Enrique Bolanos and Minister of Defense Jose Adan Guerra have shown that they lack the power to force the armed services to destroy about 1,000 Soviet-made portable anti-aircraft missiles. The missiles, left over from the civil war that ended in 1990, are maintained by foreign technicians from the former Soviet Union, and in the hands of terrorists would pose a serious threat to global civil aviation. In November 2004, President Bolanos promised U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that all of the missiles would be destroyed within eighteen months. In fact, U.S. Department

4 Pion-Berlin, David. Op cit. P. 19

of State spokesman Richard A. Boucher said, “President Bolanos of Nicaragua had given assurances several times ‘that Nicaragua would destroy all of its man-portable missiles in order to reduce the chance that they might fall into the hands of criminals and terrorists.’”⁵ Further, the armed forces are supported by the Nicaraguan Congress, controlled by a coalition of President Bolanos’s political opponents, who consider themselves authorized to destroy the missiles. Since the Sandinistas are a major force in the Congress, as well as in the military, the democratically elected president and the minister of defense are unable to implement a promise they made to the United States.

In late April, a special session made up of opposition legislators in Ecuador’s 100-seat Congress, bowing to the pressure of escalating street demonstrations, voted 62 to 0 to remove President Lucio Gutierrez, and swore in Vice President Alfredo Palacio to replace him. Admiral Victor Hugo Rosero, chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, announced immediately that the military had withdrawn its support from Gutierrez. Less than a week before, on 15 April, President Gutierrez had surrounded himself with the armed forces commanders as he dissolved the Supreme Court and declared a state of emergency in Quito. When protests resulted, the army did not act to restore order, and the president was forced to lift the state of emergency. The resulting congressional resolution that stripped him of power accused the president of “abandoning his post.” President Gutierrez, who had been democratically elected in late 2002, refused to step down. “Finally, the army hustled Mr. Gutierrez out of the presidential palace.”⁶ The armed forces, in short, acted as a power broker by withdrawing their support at a critical moment, thereby allowing the congress to implement a clearly unconstitutional change of power. Ironically, Gutierrez himself, when a colonel in the Ecuadoran Army, had been part of a junta that toppled the government of President Jamil Mahuad in January 2000, thus illustrating the ongoing crisis in civil-military relations in Ecuador.⁷

In Nicaragua, Ecuador and Bolivia, civil-military relations are complicated by the fact that these new democracies are not yet consolidated.⁸ Colombia, by contrast, is one of the two or three oldest democracies in

5 *New York Times* 23 February 2005.

6 *The Economist* 23 April 2005.

7 See on this point Ribando, Clare. 11 January 2005. *Ecuador: Political and Economic Situation and U.S. Relations*. Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C.

8 I use the now standard conceptualization of democratic consolidation as found, for example, in Linz, Juan J. and Stepan, Alfred. 1996. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, pp. 5-6.

Latin America, with elected governments since 1958 and a civilian-led ministry of defense since 1991. What few outsiders appreciate, however, is that there was a “deal” made at the time of the transition from military rule in 1958 in which the civilians agreed to leave national security and defense to the armed forces, and the armed forces would leave the rest of government and policy to the civilians.⁹ This would be a fair enough deal, except that the armed forces showed themselves unable, or unwilling, to defeat an insurgency that began in 1964, and became increasingly far-reaching, violent, and well-financed through drug running, kidnapping, and extortion.

The United States became deeply involved in Colombia’s internal conflicts in the 1980s, first through counter-drug strategies as part of President Ronald Reagan’s “war on drugs,” then escalating with U.S. military and financial support for Plan Colombia in the Clinton and Bush administrations. Post-9/11 counterterrorism funding brought the total U.S. commitment to Colombia to \$4.5 billion by mid-2005.¹⁰ With this high level of U.S. support, pressure increased on the civilians to deal with the insurgency, and they in turn increased the pressure on the armed forces. On 27 April 2005 Minister of Defense Jorge Alberto Uribe, acting on behalf of President Alvaro Uribe (the two are not related), fired four of the six highest-ranking Army generals. There were clearly many reasons for this dramatic action, including the generals’ resistance to directions that they operate jointly with the other services and the Colombian National Police (PNC) in the counter-insurgency efforts. There were also disagreements with General Carlos Alberto Ospina, commander of the military forces, over the loss of economic benefits that accrue to the highest-level officers from their positions as defense attaches and in government-run businesses.¹¹ In short, once the Minister of Defense in President Uribe’s democratically-elected government attempted to exert actual control over the Colombian Army in order to better use resources and achieve military success, four of the six top generals pushed back, and were fired.

9 President Alberto Lleras Camargo in his speech to the top military officers at the Teatro Patria on 9 May, 1958 clearly distinguished between the political and the military domains. “When the Armed Forces enter into politics the first thing that is damaged is its unity, because it opens up controversy in its ranks. ... I do not want for the Armed Forces to deliberate about how to govern the nation.... But, I do not want, by any means, that politicians decide on how to manage the Armed forces, in their technical functions, in their discipline, in their regulations, and in their personnel.”

10 See Veillette, Connie 9 May 2005. *Plan Colombia: A Progress Report* Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C.

11 For reporting on these events see *Semana* and *Cambio* 4 June 2005 and *El Espectador* 1 June 2005.

The fired generals went to the media and denounced Minister Uribe for “lacking moral authority and not having sufficient knowledge about defense issues.”¹² Thus the hedgehog reacted by accusing the fox of not knowing the “one big thing,” even though the Colombian Army has failed to show it knows enough even to force the insurgents to the negotiating table, let alone win the war.¹³ As happened in Nicaragua and Ecuador, the Colombian Congress began debating during the last week of May whether to censure Minister of Defense Uribe for firing the generals. In short, while on the surface civil-military relations appeared to be stable and democratic, once civilians leaders put pressure on the Army to change in order to achieve military success and better utilize resources, they encountered tremendous resistance leading to the unprecedented action by Minister of Defense Uribe and a reaction by the Congress to undercut him.

The above three cases demonstrate the continuing issues of control and access to power in civil-military relations, as democratically-elected civilians confront certain military “realities.” Other cases could include Bolivia and probably Paraguay, where the democracies are not consolidated and the armed forces tend to be drawn into the political vacuum. There are several other sets of issues involving civilians and the armed forces, however, that are either new to the region or in some ways innovative.

Peacekeeping and peacemaking, know collectively as peace support operations (PSO), are currently an integral part of the spectrum of roles and missions of armed forces throughout the world. Argentina was the regional leader in this area, with its own PSO training center. More recently, Brazil, Chile, and Guatemala have made their first forays into what are termed Chapter 7 operations under the United Nations Charter—that is, peacemaking vs. peacekeeping—by sending troops to Haiti. Chile also has established a PSO training center. And, in an initiative that can only be explained by regional and global politics, Honduras and El Salvador sent troops to support the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq. In fact, by February 2005, El Salvador had deployed its fourth contingent of troops to Iraq.¹⁴ Both El Salvador and Guatemala also are planning to establish PSO training centers. All scholars who write on any aspect of PSO emphasize the critical civil-

12 Ibid, *Semana*.

13 For a powerful analysis of the need for reforms to fight the war see Fundacion Seguridad & Democracia. 2003. *Fuerzas Militares para la Guerra; La agenda pendiente de la reforma Militar*. Ensayos de Seguridad y Democracia, Bogota.

14 See Ribando, Clare. 7 March 2005. *El Salvador: Political, Economic, and Social Conditions and Relations with the United States*. Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C.

military component of these operations, not only at the top policy – making levels where the ministries of foreign affairs have to work closely with the ministries of defense, but also at the local levels where troops are constantly interacting with local governments and non – governmental organizations (NGOs).¹⁵ There is, in short, a new element of civil-military relations in Latin America as increasing numbers of countries become involved in what unfortunately promises to be a growth industry.

Even more unfortunately, many countries in the region have their own internal crime problems that are extremely serious and threaten not only the quality of life of millions of people but also the governability of these new democracies. In addition to the enormous issues of organized crime and money laundering in the tri – border region (Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay), organized crime and narco-terrorism in Colombia, and money laundering in Panama, there is the newer phenomenon of the “*maras*” or gangs in Central America and Mexico.¹⁶ If the new police forces were larger, better trained, better funded, etc., the *maras* might not be an issue of civil-military relations. This is clearly not the case, however, in Guatemala and Honduras where the presidents have ordered army troops out on the streets to attempt to control the *maras* and to assert the presence of the state, albeit weakly and haphazardly. In El Salvador, the army supports the National Civilian Police, but elsewhere in the Central American region the issue is really one of the government using the armed forces. Further, given the recent history and challenges of the countries in the sub-region, crime is an issue of national security that demands decisions from the top levels of government, by the presidents themselves.

Finally, since 11 September 2001, even if countries in the region (except Colombia) had not been interested in counterterrorism, Washington has made it priority number one in international relations. As General Bantz Craddock states in his *SOUTHCOM Priorities and Investment Guidance: War on Terrorism*, “The #1 priority for this command is to prevent terrorist groups from using the SOUTHCOM AOR as a staging ground to conduct terrorist operations against the United States or our vital interests in the Western Hemisphere, including partner nations throughout the region. We must prepare, position and employ our resources in ways that enable us to

15 Among other excellent anthologies on this topic see Crocker, Chester, Osler Hampson, Fen, and Aall, Pamela eds. 2001. *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*. U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C.

16 For references on the expanding literature on the topic of the *maras* see my article at www.ccc.nps.navy.mil

detect, monitor, and, if directed, interdict terrorist activities in our AOR.”¹⁷ Other countries throughout the region are very strongly encouraged to strengthen their capabilities in intelligence and special operations, and to cooperate and coordinate with each other and with the United States. These again are civil-military issues, since both intelligence and special operations forces are mainly run by the military, and decisions about their use are made at the very highest levels of both the civilian and military hierarchies. While there may not be much in the media on these issues of intelligence, special operations, and coordination, anyone who visits these countries or attends training courses with Latin American civilians and officers in the United States and in the region itself should be aware that much is going on.

From this short summary of some of the highlights in contemporary Latin American national security, defense, and civil-military relations it should be obvious that civilians must be engaged, informed, and knowledgeable if they are to utilize scarce funds, personnel, and equipment to deal with one or more of the issues of PSO, *maras*, and counterterrorism in the most effective ways.¹⁸ They really have no option, depending on the country, about being involved in PSO if they want other nations to take them seriously, or about fighting the *maras* before these gangs take over even more of the cities, or having effective intelligence to prevent terrorists from using their countries to stage attacks on the United States. They have to act; how well they act, how well informed they must be, is the real issue. Nobody can expect civilians to become hedgehogs and know everything about the “one big thing” that the officers spend their careers studying and doing. Rather, as foxes, they have to know many things, including some basic elements of national security and defense. This point is obvious to me. The fact that it is not obvious to others, including one of the foremost scholars in the field, suggests that I have a case to make.

DAVID PION-BERLIN AND POLITICAL MANAGEMENT OF THE MILITARY IN LATIN AMERICA

In his recent article, “Political Management of the Military in Latin America”, David Pion-Berlin argues somewhat polemically about what civilian policymakers need to know in Latin America. He states that civilians

17 SOUTHCOM, 3 February 2005, Miami, Florida.

18 The military also plays a critical part in humanitarian assistance for natural disasters. This is an important mission throughout the region, and in Mexico is probably still its most important role.

“have no incentive to learn about defense. Still, the military must be managed. What Latin America needs are civilians who can manage the military in political terms, not defense terms. In this respect, Latin America is in better shape than we might think, but we would never know that within the confines of current intellectual constructs.”¹⁹ In this section, I will outline some of Pion-Berlin’s basic arguments, and then in the following sections discuss the validity of his premises in depth. My purpose here is not to “take on” Pion-Berlin, whose scholarly contributions I greatly respect, but rather to “take off” from his argument, and, I hope, to complement it.

Pion-Berlin suggests that civilian policy makers, today as in the past, lack incentives to learn about defense. He points out that historically, the region was relatively unscathed by wars with external enemies, and that currently, “internal threats (narcotraffickers, terrorists, guerrillas) do not pose challenges that warrant great military preparedness and sophistication.” Further, he claims, “Latin America is not a region where politicians have ever had or will ever have the incentive to get up to speed on defense issues,” in terms either of resources or employment.²⁰ Pion-Berlin highlights the contrast in competence between civilians and officers, by pointing out that, “With defense perceived to be off-limits, civilians have never been able to prove their worth. Instead, they have developed a kind of inferiority complex that just reinforces their dependency on the military.”²¹ He concludes, “Civilians have not *and will not* become sufficiently well versed on defense matters anytime soon. They will always have a significant knowledge deficit because there is no incentive for them to learn defense.”²² He further elaborates on disincentives for civilians to learn about defense, and states that militaries themselves do not have many roles to play, but rather “occupy rearguard positions, waiting for the occasional call to assist other forces.”²³

The lack of civilian expertise is not such a big problem, however, because “During the past two decades, while the *balance of competence* still tilts heavily in favor of the military, the *balance of power* has moved in favor of civilians.”²⁴ Pion-Berlin lists measures governments have taken to bring the militaries under civilian control, and contrasts the requirements in Latin America for civilian control with other continents where the threats, demands, and payoffs are greater.

19 Pion-Berlin, David. Op. Cit. P. 19.

20 Ibid. P. 21.

21 Ibid. P. 22.

22 Ibid. PP. 22-23.

23 Ibid. P. 24

24 Ibid. P. 26.

He states that civilians must manage the military since it is both the coercive arm of the state and a self-interested corporation whose needs must be addressed. “Civilian leaders have managed the military, largely through a form of political civilian control, which is a low cost means of achieving a relative calm in civil-military affairs without investing in extensive institution building, expertise, legislative oversight, and large budgets. This has been the *modus operandi* for the majority of presidents and defense ministers in Latin America for some time.”²⁵ He continues the argument on management, or control, by noting, “While civilians interface, they do not intervene. The government stays out of the military’s defense sphere of influence principally because of its lack of knowledge and staff. In virtually all Latin American governments, legislatures, and defense ministries, there exists an overwhelming sense that the armed forces have a near-monopoly on defense wisdom and that civilians’ deficit of military knowledge can never be adequately overcome.”²⁶

TAKING OFF FROM PION-BERLIN’S ARGUMENT

Widely accepted definitions of democratic consolidation emphasize that in a democracy, no area of government can be excluded from the control of elected civilian leaders.²⁷ Accordingly, civilians cannot be absent from an area of national governance as important as defense, “inferiority complex” or not. The recent experiences in Ecuador and Nicaragua underline the fact that these countries are not consolidated democracies. The experience of Colombia’s democratically elected civilian leaders, who ran into solid opposition when they decided to exert their authority, by contrast, should lead us to question our assumptions about democratic consolidation even in this “historic democracy.”

While Latin America is indeed a relative “zone of peace” with regard to external conflict, it is not peaceful internally, as illustrated by the gangs, or *maras*, in Central America and Mexico, and drug traffickers, organized crime, and insurgencies elsewhere. Due to a lack of other instruments, such as sufficiently large and professional police forces, civilian political policy makers in Brazil, Mexico, and Central American states find themselves relying on the armed forces to hold the front line against criminal gangs. In most countries

25 Ibid. P. 28.

26 Ibid. P. 29.

27 See for example, Schmitter, Philippe C and Karl, Terry. 1993 “What Democracy Is ... and Is Not” in Diamond, Larry and Plattner, Marc F. *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. P. 45.

in the region, as well as in other parts of the world, the military also bears responsibility for intelligence collection and analysis, the use of which then can have a direct or indirect effect on the military's roles and missions.

Civilian political leaders also direct the military to fulfill certain international responsibilities short of war, as illustrated by the involvement of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, and other Latin American countries in peace support operations. These roles and missions are not directly related to national defense, but they rely mainly on the armed forces, and to a lesser degree on gendarmerie and other police forces. For example, a Brazilian general officer heads up the UN Mission in Haiti, and has a Brazilian brigade of 967 soldiers, including 245 Marines, deployed there.²⁸

In short, the evidence shows that civilian policy makers not only manage the armed forces, but also decide on their roles and missions, whether those civilians want to or not and whether or not they are well informed. The existence of "inferiority complexes" therefore is mainly a matter of perception, and it is for this reason that I use the metaphor of the hedgehog and the fox. Civilian policy makers do not need to know the "one big thing."²⁹ While they certainly must know something, it is more important that they establish stable institutions that embody and perpetuate the expertise needed to deal with possible roles and missions as they arise. Only in this way can democratic governments deal with problems and crises in a routine and internationally acceptable manner.

Building on Pion-Berlin's emphasis on civilian control, and in order to assist interested foxes to better understand what is involved in contemporary national security and defense, and thus in civil-military relations, I will further elaborate on a model for understanding civil-military relations.³⁰ This model

28 For data on the Brazilian Army brigade see www.exercito.gov.br. Besides Brazil, there are military personnel from other Latin American countries in the Haiti mission (known as MINUSTAH), including Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. Chile's battalion of 336 military included as well special forces troops. As of 30 April 2005 there were 7,495 uniformed personnel, including 6,207 troops and 1,622 civilian police.

29 For an example of how expertise *can* stand a civilian leader in good stead, Chilean Minister of Defense Michelle Bachelet gained considerable knowledge during a year-long course at the Inter-American Defense College in 1998. Most Chileans agree that she did a superb job as Minister of Defense during a complicated time, January 2002 to September 2004, which served to put her in the lead at this time for the presidential elections in December 2005.

30 It should be noted that it is not only David Pion-Berlin who emphasizes control. The very influential Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) emphasizes control over all other possible elements. See, for eg, their name and website (www.dcaf.ch) In their most recent publication there is a single focus on control, or oversight, and slight, if any attention to what the intelligence agencies should be doing in this era of global terrorism. See Born, Hans and Leigh, Ian. 2005 *Making Intelligence Accountable: Legal Standards and Best Practice for Oversight of Intelligence Agencies* Publishing House of the Parliament of Norway, Oslo.

grows out of my work at the Center for Civil-Military Relations (CCMR) at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California.

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS CONCEPTUALIZED AS A TRINITY

Since 1994, CCMR has offered short courses on a wide variety of topics dealing with all aspects of civil-military relations throughout the world. In Latin America, between 2003 and 2005, we offered programs involving 2,376 participants (674 civilians and 1702 military officers) from eighteen Latin American and Caribbean nations. At CCMR we must respond to the customer, in this case the Latin American civilian policymakers and military officers who request our programs and then participate in them. We do not have our own, independent, funding; we must compete for different sources of funding with a myriad of other government, non-governmental and for-profit organizations. Once a program is agreed upon, we must again compete for the participation of the relevant civilian and military, current and future, policymakers. In short, CCMR works within an extremely competitive environment, which forces us to respond to the priorities and concerns of the customers. By responding to the priorities of the policymakers in Latin America, we have developed programs that address a wide range of roles and missions (PSO, counterterrorism, intelligence, humanitarian assistance, etc.), institutions (ministries of defense, national security councils, legislatures, etc.), and transparent processes (budgeting, contracting, acquisitions, etc.).

Based on the work of CCMR and also drawing from the general literature on national security and defense and civil-military relations, I propose that we conceptualize civil-military relations as a trinity: democratic civilian control, effectiveness, and efficiency.³¹ Fundamental to these relations, rightly emphasized by Pion-Berlin, is democratic civilian control of the armed forces. I will argue below, however, that for this control to function as it should, it must be institutionalized along with the knowledge needed to exercise intelligent control, not only developed in the person of the minister of defense or her staff.

31 The more global interest in our programs is manifested in the request by the U.S. Department of State for an article by us on "Teaching Civil – Military Relations" which is now posted in six languages, including Portuguese and Spanish, with Chinese coming next, at <http://usinfo.state.gov> under Products, Electronic Journals, Nov. 2004.

The relevant literature on effectiveness and efficiency uses these terms inconsistently, therefore I will clarify what I mean by each of them.³² By *effectiveness* I mean that the armed services and other security forces are able in fact to implement the roles and missions assigned to them by democratically elected civilians. Since there is a wide variety of roles and missions that potentially can be assigned to the armed forces in Latin American, policymakers must have sufficient knowledge to decide what tasks should be assigned and how effective the military has been in fulfilling them. *Efficiency* means that the roles and missions are achieved at the least possible cost in lives and resources. Because there are no simple mathematical formulae that define ‘least possible cost,’ countries must have the institutions in place to determine priorities for assigning some level of resources in money and personnel. These bodies also must have valid monitoring or oversight processes to ensure that the resources go where they are intended. In Latin America and elsewhere today, civil-military relations are best conceptualized as this trinity. The civilian policymakers, the foxes, need to think beyond problems of control, and also consider whether their forces can in fact achieve the roles and missions assigned to them, and at what cost. As there are never enough resources for everything, these decisions will involve trade-offs, for example by making less available for humanitarian assistance in trade for more involvement in PSO.

THE INSTITUTIONS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE THE TRINITY

When we look at how different countries deal with the different elements of the trinity, we can identify four necessary sets of structures and processes, which I will here term “institutions” to emphasize their empirical nature vs. a more conceptual, formalistic notion.³³ After very briefly describing how they support the trinity, I will discuss their presence or absence in Colombia and some countries of Central America.

Ministries of Defense (MOD) may be created for several very different reasons, but ultimately they can support all three elements of

32 The classic statement is Barnard, Chester. 1962 *The Functions of the Executive* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. A more recent discussion and utilization of the concepts is Linz, Juan J. 1978. *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, & Reequilibration* Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

33 For this approach see my Introduction in Bruneau, Thomas and Tollefson, Scott, eds. 2006 *Who Guards the Guardians, and How: Modern Civil – Military Relations* University of Texas Press, Austin. (forthcoming.) The definition of institutions, which is taken from the “New Institutionalism” approach, is very broad and dynamic.

the trinity.³⁴ Civilian policymakers can in fact control the armed forces through the MOD bureaucracy. Indeed, for this very reason the North Atlantic Treaty Organization requires prospective members to have a civilian-led MOD in place before they can join the organization. The MOD also typically will support military roles and missions, and evaluate their effectiveness. Finally, a cadre of civilian and military lawyers, economists, and accountants within the MOD will determine the efficiency with which resources are being used.

Legislatures in established democracies, both presidential and parliamentary, support all three elements of the trinity. They ensure democratic civilian control by maintaining real separation of powers, controlling the budget, and exercising oversight. Diversity of political representation through elections (not only, but especially in presidential regimes), and the development of expertise among members and particularly their staffs, allows legislatures to improve the effectiveness of roles and missions. The most dramatic example of this in the United States was the Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, but there are cases from Brazil and Argentina as well. Furthermore, legislatures routinely implement an oversight function through hearings, auditing units, and inspectors general to ensure efficiency. In fact, in most well-established democracies their role in efficiency is probably greater than in effectiveness.³⁵

An established mechanism for inter-agency communication and cooperation, whether situated in a national security council, or some other executive-level organization such as Brazil's Institutional Security Cabinet (GSI), is a critical institution for the effectiveness element of the trinity, in the sense that I am using it here. The inter-agency process is an element of democratic civilian control but depends on other, more basic institutions, such as a MOD, to influence effectiveness. It probably does not have much impact on efficiency. However, without any inter-agency process, there is virtually no way for civilian leaders to determine roles and missions in any logical manner. The phrase from *Alice in Wonderland* comes to mind here: "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." In

34 The literature on this topic is minimal. See for a review and argument the chapter on MODs by Richard Goetze and myself, in Bruneau and Tollefson, *ibid.*

35 See the two chapters on global comparisons of legislatures by Jeanne Giraldo in Bruneau and Tollefson, *ibid.* See for the Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 Locher, James R. 2002. *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unified the Pentagon*. Texas A & M Press, College Station, Texas.

most countries, civilian policymakers take up new roles and missions in an *ad hoc* manner, without examining costs, benefits, and trade-offs, often because of simple inertia. Since national security and defense today span such a wide spectrum of possibilities, a robust inter-agency coordinating process is necessary for effectiveness.³⁶

The intelligence system supports the first two elements of the trinity. Contemporary democracies maintain both fairly elaborate intelligence systems that include military and civilian agencies, and very elaborate mechanisms for exerting democratic control. The methods of control often include executive, legislative, judicial, and external (media and NGO) elements.³⁷ There is also much emphasis today on effectiveness of intelligence, which is scrutinized through both executive and legislative institutions. There is not, however, any real effort to monitor efficiency in any intelligence system that I am familiar with. The emphasis on secrecy, in collection, analysis and budgeting, does not allow for any true concern with efficiency.

Table 1 below illustrates how these four institutional dimensions support the three key elements of civil-military relations.

TABLE 1:
Institutional Bases for Trinity of Democratic Civil-military Relations

	MOD	Legislature	Inter-Agency Process	Intelligence
Democratic Control	X	X		X
Effectiveness	X	X	X	X
Efficiency	X	X		

36 In Chile, with the current defense reform, the inter – agency process will be located in the President’s Council of Ministers, or Cabinet.

37 For oversight and control see Lowenthal, Mark M. 2000 *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy* CQ Press, Washington, D.C. I also have an edited book on intelligence reform and democracy currently under review that includes all aspects of oversight and control.

INSTITUTIONAL BASES FOR ACHIEVING THE TRINITY IN COLOMBIA AND CENTRAL AMERICA

If we examine Colombia and Central America we find weaknesses in terms of the institutional bases for democratic civil-military relations. This is in contrast to the more established democracies, or even the newer democracies in Eastern and Central Europe, where the pressure for reforms is tremendous due to those countries' desire to join NATO and the European Union.

Table 2 identifies institutional weaknesses in four Latin American countries.

TABLE 2
Institutional Bases for the Trinity in Four Countries

	MOD	Legislature	Inter-Agency Process	Intelligence
Colombia	X			X
El Salvador		X	X	X
Guatemala				
Nicaragua	X			

The information in Table 2 suggests that there are variations from country to country, and I will offer my tentative explanation for those variations in the following section.³⁸ It is important to emphasize that I am focusing on the *institutions* that have been created to implement the trinity of civil-military relations. It is not a matter of whether President Berger in Guatemala can fire generals and cut the defense budget, or whether President Uribe's national security advisor is a close personal friend without a staff. The point is whether institutions have been built both to provide stability and embed expertise to deal with issues of national security and defense. I should note that three of the countries are in some turmoil, and we must remember that it took many years for Argentina and Chile to establish institutions along these four dimensions.

38 Unfortunately, there is little written on these topics which is up to date. My assessments here are based on multiple visits to all of the countries for CCMR seminars with civilian and military policy-makers. For background see Williams, Williams P. and Walter, Knut. 1997. *Militarization and Demilitarization in El Salvador's Transition to Democracy* University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh.

Colombia is making progress in reforming and strengthening its MOD and intelligence system.³⁹ The legislature, however, is almost totally absent from national security and defense decision-making, and a MOD-president relationship substitutes for an inter-agency process. El Salvador is making tremendous progress. While the MOD is still headed by an active-duty general, there have been major reforms in all other areas. A sizeable group of members and staff in the congress are interested in and informed about defense, there is a robust inter-agency process at least in counterterrorism, while intelligence has recently been reformed as well. In Guatemala, change is imminent. In the meantime the Guatemalan MOD is very weak, the legislature is absent from participation in these issues, there is virtually no inter-agency process, and intelligence seems to be ineffective and uncontrolled. Nicaragua's development is also very rudimentary. There is a civilian-led MOD, but it is weak, with a small staff (in contrast to the army which has ready access to power and resources).⁴⁰ The legislature only engages in these issues of national security and defense when it seeks to oppose the President. There is no inter-agency process and intelligence still lies mainly in the purview of the army, and thus under control of the Sandinistas.

A PRELIMINARY EFFORT TO EXPLAIN VARIATIONS IN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

Even if other students of these issues might disagree with my assessment, I am fairly sure there is agreement on the variations among these countries and others in the region. Here I would like to suggest some possible lines of analysis to explain why we see such variation among countries. I suggest four main areas where scholars should focus their analysis.

First, in accordance with many others scholars, including most of those writing in the transitions-consolidation literature and democratic civil-

39 See Villamizar, Andres. 2004. *La reforma de la inteligencia: Un imperativo democratico*. Ensayos de Seguridad y Democracia, Bogota. Also, Boraz, Steven C. 2005. "Controlling Intelligence in Colombia: Advancing Democratic Consolidation in Latin America" *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* Fall 2005 or Winter 2006. It should be noted that Minister of Defense Uribe resigned on 7 July. I continue to believe that the MOD itself is being reformed, but the point of departure was very basic.

40 While finishing this article I received an e mail from my friend, Jose Adan Guerra, the Minister of Defense, that he had resigned as of 10 June 2005.

military relations, I agree that we must first look at the terms and understandings of the transitions to democracy, and the prerogatives accruing to the armed forces.⁴¹ This applies as well to the simultaneous peace and democratization processes that took place at the end of the civil wars in Central America, which included explicit terms for civil-military relations. Politics has a way of taking on its own momentum, however, and the terms of the transitions and ancillary brokered agreements can and do change.⁴²

The second focal point is international involvement and influence. This factor was important in El Salvador and Guatemala, and somewhat less important in Nicaragua, where the U.S. was initially heavily involved and then, for a variety of largely domestic political reasons adopted a policy of benign neglect. It includes bilateral relations, primarily but not only with the United States (Great Britain for example is involved in Guatemalan civil-military relations), the United Nations, and the many NGOs that are present in Colombia and Guatemala. There is nothing in the region equivalent to the influence of NATO and the EU, however, which lay down explicit and detailed rules for democratic civil-military relations among other things, as prerequisites for nations that want to acquire the benefits of membership in these organizations.

Third, we have found that issues in civil-military relations, at least in countries that were formerly under military control, will be addressed only when the government is sufficiently stable and coherent to be able in fact to govern. This was the case in Portugal for thirteen years after the revolution, and is the case today in Guatemala and Nicaragua, though Guatemala, under President Berger, is showing some progress. Both Argentina and Brazil struggled with the most difficult phase of civil-military relations, which is reform of the intelligence system.

41 While suggesting other factors in the last paragraph of his chapter, Aguero really looks only to the transition – consolidation in a recent chapter. See Aguero, Felipe. 2001. “Institutions, Transitions, and Bargaining: Civilians and the Military in Shaping Post-authoritarian Regimes” in Pion-Berlin, David. *Civil – Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

42 See, for example, Hunter, Wendy. 1997. *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Therefore, until Guatemala and Nicaragua can become more stable politically, progress in the trinity is likely to remain tentative.⁴³

Fourth, political learning is an important but imprecise concept, and difficult to quantify.⁴⁴ At a minimum, we can envision leaders learning about civil-military relations in MODs as well as a variety of educational institutions and think tanks. The College for Higher Strategic Studies (CAEE) in El Salvador has an impressive eleven-year record of educating civilians and officers who will eventually work together in the executive and legislature. There is a similarly successful organization, the National Defense College (CDN), in Honduras. Nicaragua unfortunately has no such institution, while the myriad of NGOs and think tanks in Guatemala, seem beholden to foreign-influenced agendas rather than those coming from within Guatemalan society. One of the biggest problems in Colombia was the total absence of a think tank, university program, or NGO focused on national security and defense, and civil-military relations. Today the think-tank *Fundación Seguridad y Democracia*, which is stimulating and informing a debate on national security and defense issues, seems to be having a positive impact on political learning in Colombia.

CONCLUSION

David Pion-Berlin encourages us to challenge “current intellectual constructs” in civil-military relations in Latin America. I have done so here by adding two other elements to civil-military relations beyond democratic control—effectiveness and efficiency. Considering the very large spectrum of roles and missions that Latin American armed forces are currently engaged in, it seems only logical that civilian policymakers

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- 43 This sense of the weakness of an unstable government to deal with the military in Nicaragua is captured well by Villarreal, Margarita Castillo 2005. “Nicaragua: Civilians and Military After the Sandinista Revolution.” *Military Review* March – April. “When Nicaragua is socially, politically, and economically stable, perhaps the army will cede more autonomy to civilian authorities.” Guatemalan political instability and government ineffectiveness are highlighted in The World Bank. 9 March 2005. *Guatemala Country Economic Memorandum (CEM): Challenges to Higher Economic Growth* The World Bank, Washington, D.C. p. 71, which ranks Guatemala near the bottom of the world in terms of these indicators.
- 44 Among other useful sources see the following. McCoy, Jennifer L. ed. 2000. *Political Learning and Redemocratization in Latin America: Do Politicians Learn from Political Crises?* North-South Center Press, Miami, Florida; Cohen, Michael D. and Sproull, Lee S. eds. *Organizational Learning* Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, CA; and, Bermeo, Nancy 1992. “Democracy and the Lessons of Dictatorship.” *Comparative Politics* April, pp. 273-291.

possess a bare minimum of knowledge about national security and defense. They do not have to become hedgehogs, but they must become familiar with the relevant issues. Most importantly, they need to build institutions whereby the expertise and processes needed for intelligent decision-making can become embedded. All of this is possible through political learning from other nations' experiences, education and training programs, and the rapidly – expanding literature on these topics.

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